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The terms "new morality" and "sexual revolution" have received increased public exposure in the past decade. The frequency of premarital relations seems to be "running ahead" of professed standards. Behavior changed during the 1920's, but norms for premarital morality did not change. However, since the twenties, these standards have been changing in the direction of sanctioning premarital relations when mutual love and affection exist. These more liberal standards have become dominant in the attitudes of college students. Unfortunately, they have been misinterpreted as evidence of a continuing increase in the frequency of premarital relations. The data presented indicate that the incidence rate leveled off after 1930. What has occurred is that standards are "catching up" with behavior. Counselors, educators and administrators must be cognizant of this changing culture. They must aim at enhancing the students' personal growth by (1) increased individual involvement with them, (2) more meaningful relationships, and (3) fewer normative regulations. (LS)

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THE NEW MORALITY IN COLLEGE STUDENT RELATIONSHIPS[1]

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Moral behavior is measured by its degree of conformity to generally accepted norms. Moral issues for college students, then, might involve academic honesty, intoxication, use of drugs and any other activity that involves some type of ethical decision. It is argued by some (Eddy, 1966) that the more subtle principles as justice, integrity, loyalty, and courage of convictions should not be forgotten. Each of these concepts demands a personal commitment -- and personal commitment rests at the very core of moral decisions. "Morality involves individuality, being awake to responsibility, and a willingness to make personal choices" (Niblett, 1963, p. 25).

At the risk of destroying this more inclusive definition, this article will examine the issue of premarital heterosexual relations in considerable detail. Perhaps there will be some insight that can be adapted for a more global application.

The terms "New Morality" and "Sexual Revolution" have had a good deal of public exposure within the past decade. Eppel (1963) attributes this phenomenon in part to a heritage of Victorian attitudes which have been given new impetus by popularized reports of

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illegitimacy, veneral disease and abortion rates among teeanagers. Whatever the reasons, there is little doubt that sensationalized material in the mass media has influenced public attitudes. Too often the sad conclusion is that emerging moral standards, as examplified by today's adolescents, are considered synonomous with free love and sexual promiscuity. The available research, however, is most interesting and somewhat more optimistic.

* * *

With regard to the incidence of premarital sexual relations, organized and objective studies comprise a relatively small collection. Consequently, it will be necessary to cite research pertaining to the general population as well as studies that utilize a sample of college students.

One of the first major studies in this area was conducted by Terman in 1938. He reported that the rate of premarital intercourse steadily increased for the period beginning with subjects born before 1890 and ending with those born during the decade of 1910.

After analyzing his data, Terman (1938) made the statement that should this liberalization continue at the same rate "virginity at marriage would be close to the vanishing point for males born after 1930 and for females born after 1940." This indicates that somewhere around 1960 virginity at marriage became obsolete -- this prediction, of course, cannot now be documented!

The basis for Terman's misinterpretation seems to rest in his data for the 1910 decade. Subsequent studies conducted by Burgess and Wallin (1953) and by Kinsey (1948) fail to substantiate the continuous rise in premarital relations. What all three studies do indicate, however, is that a considerable increase in premarital relations occurred between the 1890 and the 1900 decades of birth. That is to say that this "revolutionary" behavior was exhibited during the 1920's when the subjects were reaching late adolescence and young adulthood. Historians have recorded the confusion of the "Roaring Twenties" that accompanied the break down of traditional moral boundaries. The important fact, however, is this: it is not possible to document a continued increase in premarital intercourse from approximately 1930 to the present time.

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The most systematic study of premarital relations for college students was conducted by Ehrmann in 1959. He reported that 57 per cent of the non-veteran men and 13 per cent of the women had experienced such behavior. Nevitt Sanford (1965) recently interviewed students on three campuses and reports that from 20 to 30 per cent of the students were not virgins and only 2 to 3 per cent of the women could be labeled promiscuous. Freedman (1965) indicates that 22 per cent of the senior college women he interviewed had

experienced sexual intercourse.

The earliest research utilizing a comparable sample was conducted by Bromley and Britten in 1938. They report that 55 per cent of the men and 26 per cent of the women were participating in premarital intercourse. Other studies report a variety of figures, all of which fall within this general range (Porterfield and Salley, 1946; Finger, 1947; Ross, 1950).

Although comparisons are most difficult, it does not appear that there is a current sexual revolution or moral decline on the college campus. Referring to behavior since 1930, Freedman (1965, p. 47) made this observation. "While it is likely that the percentage of non-virgins among college women increased during this period, it does not appear that this increase was overwhelming."

It appears, then, that the frequency of sexual behavior will not in itself provide a definition of the "new morality." Reiss (1960), however, offers a meaningful dimension to this question by analyzing the Terman and Kinsey data after the sexual partner is determined. Subjects were placed in one of four categories: (1) those not experiencing premarital relations, (2) those having relations with their fiance only, (3) with fiance and others, and (4) with others only.

When the "type" of person comprising the sexual partner is known, a definite and continuing trend is revealed. Over 60 per

cent of the increase in sexual intercourse for females was accounted for within the "with fiance only" category. On the other hand, intimate contacts "with others only" showed no increase at all.

For men, the total increase in premarital relations was absorbed about equally within the categories "with fiance only" and "with fiance and others." At the same time, there was a marked decrease of relations "with others only." Within the context of these facts, Reiss (1960) (1961) (1963) defines four premarital sexual standards that will classify almost all present behavior:

(1) Abstinence

(2) Permissiveness with affection

(3) Permissiveness without affection

(4) Double Standard

The trend, he concludes, is that both men and women are having increasingly more premarital relations with their future marriage partners. Men are abandoning the double standard and women are rejecting the double standard and the standard of abstinence. Both men and women are moving simultaneously toward the standard of permissiveness with affection. Reiss (1960) terms this type of behavior "person-centered" rather than "body-centered." Person-centered relations demand mutual respect, love, understanding, and a willingness of both partners to accept responsibility for the full consequence of their actions.

It appears, then, that Farnsworth (1965) was right. The "New Morality" is characterized by fidelity and consideration for others. Physical sex is condoned only after an intimate relationship has been established and the "New Morality" does not tolerate casual or exploitive relationships. Recent attitudinal research regarding college students seems to support this conclusion.

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In a questionnaire survey Bell and Buerkle (1961) illustrated some changing attitudes toward female virginity. They obtained attitudinal questionnaires from college girls and a duplicate set from the girl's mothers. When asked if virginity was important before marriage, 88 per cent of the mothers, but only 55 per cent of the coeds responded affirmatively. Of more importance is that 83 per cent of the mothers but only 35 per cent of the college girls felt that maintaining virginity after engagement was important. The mothers were adhering to "Traditional Morality" and their daughters to the "New Morality." The authors concluded that the goal of the younger women was to be a virgin at engagement rather than at marriage.

Goldsen (1960) found that very few students (men and women) insist on chastity in their potential mates. Eighty to 85 per cent reported that previous sex experience was "not important at all," when choosing a spouse. Furthermore, only 29 per cent of the men and 38 per cent

of the women said that premarital relations were "never justified." Another study showed that "less than 5 per cent of Cornell students would break an engagement on the grounds that the fiance had premarital relations" (Jacob, 1957, p. 21). On the other hand, only a very few of the same students justified promiscuity for either men or women.

In total, these studies suggest that the present generation of students are (1) more open and honest about their behavior, (2) they consider moral judgements to be a personal matter, and (3) they are therefore more tolerant of behavior exhibited by others.

Perhaps this would be a good place to pause and summarize. What seems to be happening is that the frequency of premarital relations has been "running ahead" of professed standards. Behavior changed during the twenties but norms for premarital morality did not change -- or at least did not change as rapidly. These standards, however, have been changing ever since and are moving in the direction of sanctioning premarital relations when mutual love and affection exists. Standards are "catching up" with behavior. These more liberal standards have been detected in the attitudes of college students and unfortunately they have been mistakenly interpreted by many as evidence for a continuing increase in the frequency of premarital relations. The data, however limited, clearly show that the incidence rate leveled off after 1930.

When moral standards finally legitimize the present level of behavior, the frequency of premarital intercourse may again begin to rise. Incidentally, modern contraceptives should lend considerable support to this trend.

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Further indications of behavioral changes that will accompany the "New Morality" can be gained by a look at the Scandinavian culture where permissiveness with affection is the commonly accepted sexual standard. The typical adolescent in Norway, for example, may have intimate sexual experiences with three or four different partners before marriage (Bohm & Johnstad, 1961). The traditional "trial marriage" concept in the Scandinavian culture implies that sexual intercourse, with marriage following pregnancy, is acceptable behavior for couples who are engaged or going steady (Christensen, 1963). Christensen (1963) conducted a cross-cultural study designed to determine how premarital sex norms affect individual behavior. The study contrasted single college students from Denmark, Midwestern United States and a Mormon Society in the Intermountain region. Thus, the researcher obtained a continuum extending from sexually permissive standards to considerably restrictive sexual standards.

Of significance for our discussion is that "more Danish students approved of premarital intercourse than had actually experienced it"

(Christensen, 1963, p. 20). Both American samples reported an excess of practice over approval. And furthermore, the society that least abided by their standards was the most conservative Intermountain culture. The nature of this discrepancy in both American cultures suggested to the researcher that guilt was associated with their behavior. This "surplus of practice," being considered immoral, could involve the fear and anxiety of being detected. By contrast, some Danish students apparently felt that they had not established an intimate relationship and, consequently, had not experienced this behavior.

Guilt surrounding the first experience was reported by only 2 per cent of the Danish students but by 13 per cent and 26 per cent of the Midwestern and Intermountain students respectively. And, as might be expected, pleasure feelings associated with the first experience were reversed.

* * *

Finally, the role of the institution regarding student morality and character development must be carefully evaluated. It seems regrettable that so much effort has been directed at establishing whether or not institutions have the legal authority to impose restrictions upon student behavior. Such concepts as in loco parentis, double jeopardy, and due process of law are given a prominent position

in the literature. Effectiveness of procedures, however, may have only a subsidiary relationship with the technical and legal authority to establish them. Educators and counselors should be more concerned with these questions: Do rules and regulations really influence student behavior? Do conduct controls facilitate the maturation process? Are institutional policies helping students grow toward being more self-reliant human beings? In short, is the student being helped to establish a moral code that will influence his actions and, more importantly, that will guide his future behavior?

Theories of morality development are consistent in the conclusion that youngsters of college age no longer rely on external authority for making moral decisions (Peck & Havighurst, 1960; Piaget, 1965; Brown, 1965). Adolescents, just like adults, judge their conduct in terms of internal standards with relative independence from the social environment. Generally speaking, then, external controls are incompatible with the "New Morality." Regulations that categorize all premarital relations as immoral, for example, will do little in the way of helping students internalize ethical standards. Moral responsibility is facilitated by freeing the individual to experiences that are personally meaningful. As Niblett said, "If an individual is to develop moral strength he must make hard choices of his own actions that are right" (1963, p. 26).

This is all to suggest that counselors, educators, and administrators must not only be cognizant of our changing culture, but must

also be keenly perceptive of how their personal values relate to these changes. Past experience may be unreliable for judging modern values and, consequently, the application of these values for making moral decisions. Wrenn's warning to counselors is most timely. He asked this question: "Dare we generalize from our past to the student's future?" (1962, p. 448). As the "New Morality" emerges, the basic institutional objective is unchanging. We want to enhance personal growth, not merely to control behavior. This goal calls for more individual involvement with students, more meaningful relationships, and fewer normative regulations.

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